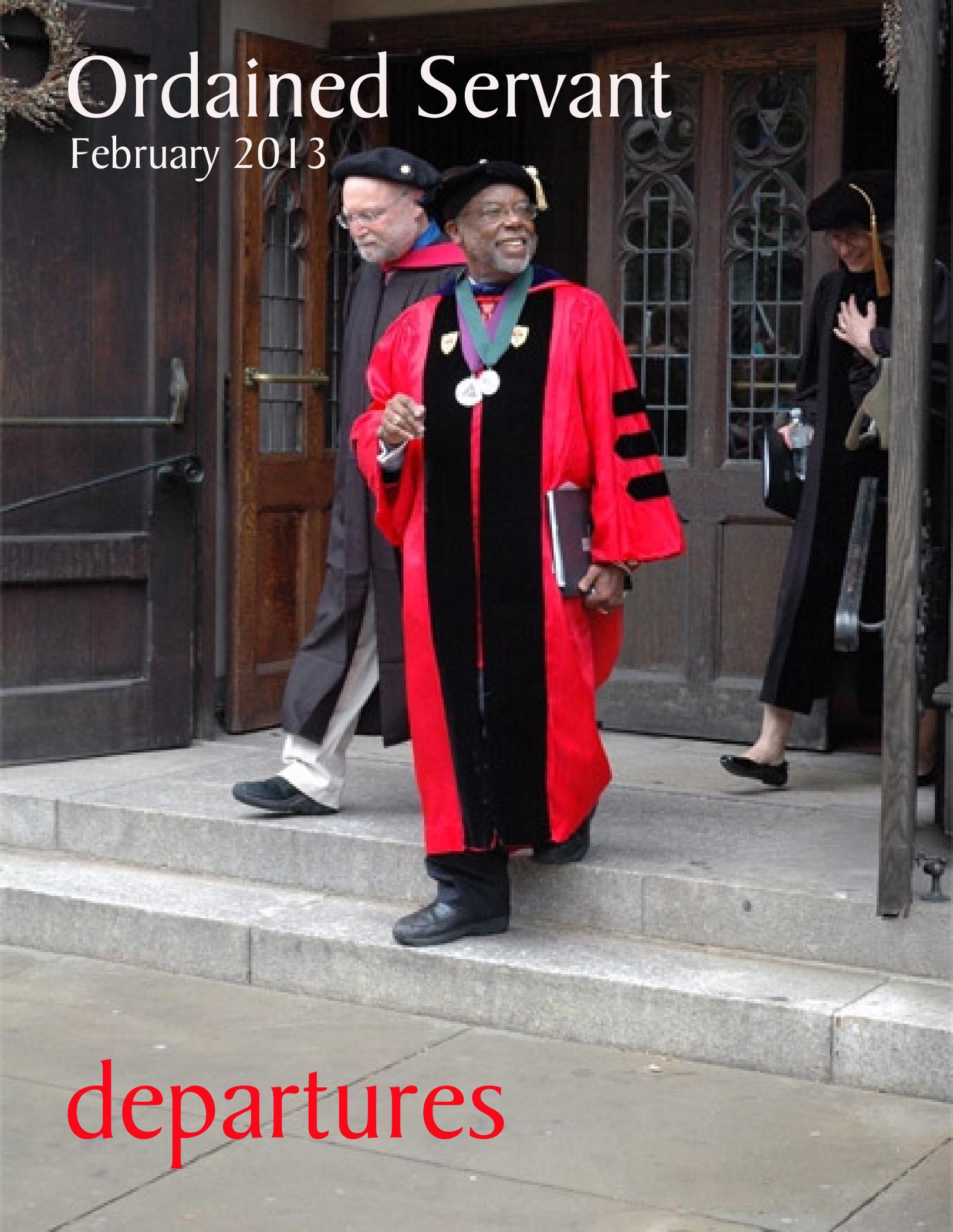


# Ordained Servant

February 2013



departures

# *Ordained Servant Online*

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### **CURRENT ISSUE: DEPARTURES**

**February 2013**

### *From the Editor*

I toyed with the idea of calling this issue “Pot pourri,” because it contains a number of themes, and then punning with the word, insisting that we not confuse this with popery. Which brings me to the point of our lead article by Steve Doe, “Reversing the Journey: When People Leave Reformed Churches.” Occasionally an officer or member leaves one of our Reformed churches for Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy. Doe asks us to consider how we should think about such departures and what we might do to help prevent them, especially in light of our Presbyterian form of government.

T. David Gordon responds to an issue raised by Theodore Turnau’s recently published book, *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective*. Do the forms of culture influence the content? How are the forms that various aspects of a culture take related to their content? Our embodied existence demands an answer to these questions.

Dennis Johnson continues his series review of Hughes Oliphant Old’s *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures* with a review of volumes 4 and 5.

Allen Tomlinson reviews a fascinating new volume of Machen’s letters written home to his mother and several others during World War I: *Letters from the Front*. This correspondence reveals a personal side of Machen that only adds to our admiration.

Finally, don’t miss another George Herbert gem, “Sonnet 1.”

Blessings in the Lamb,  
Gregory Edward Reynolds

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*Ordained Servant* exists to help encourage, inform, and equip church officers for faithful, effective, and God glorifying ministry in the visible church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its primary audience is ministers, elders, and deacons of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, as well as interested officers from other Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Through high quality editorials, articles, and book reviews we endeavor to stimulate clear thinking and the consistent practice of historic, confessional Presbyterianism.

# ServantLife

## Reversing the Journey: When People Leave Reformed Churches

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by Stephen D. Doe

### **We've Got a Problem**

We live in a fluid society. People change their houses, cars, jobs, and spouses with astonishing regularity. And, if they are Christians, they change churches too. Some of these ecclesiastical changes are simple: a move out of town and there's no OPC close by, so it is a sister Reformed denomination to which they transfer. Some changes are more puzzling: no move away physically, but people leave the OPC where they've been members and then go to another area church that, while not Reformed, at least preaches the gospel. A more heart-rending change is when people simply "drop out" of church, and the session must erase them from the rolls as having abandoned their hope in Christ. Yet, just as wrenching for pastors and elders is the sad experience of dealing with members who have left the OPC to join either the Roman Catholic Church or one of the Orthodox communions. It is this last situation, which seems to be becoming more frequent, that I want to ponder with you.

Our *Book of Church Order* outlines the responsibilities of sessions in this matter. We seek to meet with these members and dissuade them and pray that they'll agree to talk to us. We try to determine how firm their decision is, and how committed they are to that decision. We present the theological differences. We talk about the doctrine of the church. We retell the story of the Protestant Reformation and why it was necessary for Christians to break with Rome. We tell them that there are divisions within both Catholicism and Orthodoxy, that the outward unity is less than it seems. We may warn them of the unintended consequences of their decision for themselves and their families. We try to be faithful undershepherds.

But what if it isn't a church member? What if it is an ordained officer in the OPC who leaves to move into either Catholicism or Orthodoxy? What if it is a man who, at one time, subscribed to the Westminster Standards? What if it is a man who vowed to uphold the peace, purity, and unity of the church? He knows the challenges you'll present him with, and your responsibility to dissuade him from his course. Especially in the case of a minister, he knows the history of the church. He knows the theology behind the Reformation. In the case of ministers, departure from the OPC, from the Reformed faith, from Protestantism itself, is a shock to everyone. "I never knew." "He never said anything." "Nothing I said could shake his confidence in his decision." And maybe people say, "There's something wrong with him, with us, with the OPC, with Reformed churches."

It is this last situation, that of a minister leaving a Reformed church for the Roman Catholic Church, which came to me as a question and caused me to wonder what we should be learning as a church when this happens. Is something wrong with Presbyterianism when a man who knows his theology leaves what we believe is more light to a situation of less light? It is even more perplexing when men say that they are not abandoning the gospel, that their own hope is still in the fullness of the work of Jesus Christ as redeemer of God's elect. My questioner asked what the church can do to ensure more OPC pastors don't leave for Rome or for Orthodoxy. What follows is an expanded version of my response.

## **Let's Be Presbyterian!**

The question of what to do about ministers leaving the Reformed faith for either Catholicism or Orthodoxy is a painful and heart-breaking challenge to the church, but the short answer is clear: we need to be better Presbyterians! Although the things we will be considering apply to the responsibilities of ruling elders toward their pastor (and deacons in a different way), this is primarily focused on the responsibility of ministers to one another.

We look to our theology, which we are convinced is biblical and sound, because to go from a Protestant position generally, and a Reformed position specifically, into either Catholicism or Orthodoxy, flies in the face of that for which our Reformed forefathers fought. Why would someone trade the richness of the Reformed tradition for a church that has never repudiated the anathemas of the Council of Trent, or for a communion that views the debate over justification as a sign of weakness of the Western church?

An answer that is too easy, and therefore inadequate, is that the men who move away from the Reformed faith don't know their theology. Some very theologically bright men have made the move. It seems too simple to say that a man didn't know what he was doing because he really didn't understand what Protestantism is all about. That is perhaps our first response, and in some cases there may be truth to this, but certainly there are other factors as well.

First of all we need to see that, like all of our other decisions in life, the decision to leave the Reformed faith for Catholicism or Orthodoxy has other components besides an intellectual or theological one. We all do the things we do for a complex set of reasons. For example, if I am angry when another driver cuts me off in traffic, behind that anger may be that I am late for an appointment, an appointment that I am dreading, and I foolishly tried to do one more thing before I started out and so began ten minutes late, ten minutes that the volume of traffic compounded. I am mad at myself, I am feeling guilty, and the thoughtless driver simply triggers a sinful response.

What may look like a simple doctrinal rejection of historic Protestant truth may be affected by family, situation, friendships, and so on. A man may be "won" to the Roman Catholic Church by the friendship of someone who spent time with him and helped him through some difficulty. A man may have key relationships that are influential in his life, far beyond relationships with fellow presbyters. He may feel distant from fellow pastors because of tensions within a presbytery. A man may have influences from his upbringing that seem to provide comfort and stability, the "faith of his fathers" that can become his default response to changes in his life. A man may be attracted to the image of both

Catholicism and Orthodoxy as being ancient and focused on a high view of worship, and as providing a more full-orbed response to the world than much of evangelicalism offers.

## Things to Consider

A biblical anthropology helps us here. Our actions flow from our heart commitments. The heart is the fountain of all things, good and evil. We are admonished to guard our heart (Prov. 4:23, cf. Matt. 6:21, 12:34–35, Mark 6:45, Luke 12:34). As Blaise Pascal wrote, “The heart has its reasons.”<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 14:10 states that “the heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger shares its joy.” Scripture teaches us to begin with the fact that God’s judgment is that the thoughts of man’s heart are only evil continually (Gen. 6:5), from our youth upward (Gen. 8:21, cf. Eccles. 9:3, Ezek. 14:3, Rom. 3:9–18). Depravity is a functional truth which radically affects our human experience, including our decision-making. According to Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is more deceitful than all things and desperately sick, who can understand it?”

It is because of the untrustworthiness of our own hearts that we need the Word of God, and we need the church. We need the Word of God to penetrate and correct our perceptions and conclusions about our situations, our choices, and our motives. We make faulty judgments because we always tend to think that our hearts will make the right assessment. In the church we can serve one another by reminding each other of this basic truth and asking the right kind of questions of a brother. Ultimately, of course, God himself is the searcher of the heart,<sup>2</sup> yet Proverbs 20:5 says this: “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” God may use other believers to challenge us to reconsider how we are looking at things. We can convince ourselves that something is completely right, but in reality be deceived in our thinking. Our brothers can remind us to compare our thinking to the teaching of Scripture, the Word which tells us to take into account the corruption of all of man’s faculties and to see that only God’s Word can fully critique our thinking (2 Tim. 3:16–17, cf. Prov. 3:5, Jer. 17:5).

Presbyterianism, simply the church acting like the covenant community it is intended to be, can help because it means or should mean, that we are connected to one another and accountable to each other. True, Presbyterianism is always battling both the innate, sinful human tendency to think and act individualistically and that tendency’s rabid expression in the spirit of our own age. This is the spirit that says that I must make my decisions on my own without regard for others or for the larger community of believers. The “sovereign self,” as it is termed, dominates our age. Yet the church structure which Christ has given involves a bond which is reflected in the ordination vows which church officers in the OPC are required to take. Ministers vow submission to their brethren in the Lord,<sup>3</sup> a vow which expresses the connectedness to which we commit ourselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the fuller quote from Pascal: “The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things. It is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason. This, then, is faith: God felt by the heart, not by the reason.” We wouldn’t agree with much of what Pascal says, but he recognized that more than man’s intellect is involved in his decision making.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 17:10; Prov. 21:2, cf. 11:20, 20:12; 1 Sam. 16:7; Ps. 33:15, 44:21; Prov. 17:3; 1 John 3:20.

<sup>3</sup> Form of Government XXII.13.c; XXIII.8, 12.a–b, 14, 17–18.

Submission to the brethren is a vow to not allow the individualistic mind-set of our age to control us. The “sovereign self” is called to hear the brethren.

What does this mean? In the case of ministers it means that we must talk to one another more than we do. We need to have brothers whom we can trust, with whom we can raise questions with which we are wrestling, even doubts that are troubling us without being immediately condemned as falling away from the faith. Too often men do not talk to anyone about the things that discourage them, or the doubts that may plague them, much less the sins with which they struggle. It is all too common to hear of a minister who has an addiction to pornography, an addiction that remains hidden until God in his severe mercy brings it to light. Men come to the point of demitting the ministry without having talked to another brother about their discouragements. The inner struggles a man may be experiencing are rarely openly spoken of to others. This includes the frequent unwillingness to discuss with another pastor the theological issues that trouble us, or the doubts about the truths of the Reformed faith that can develop. In the quiet of our own thoughts, we do not consider the factors that play upon the heart, loyalties, fears, and pressures. A man may turn so many things over in his own mind without speaking even to his closest associates because he fears the reaction he’ll encounter or that he will be “labeled” as unstable. Tendencies may develop within a man without any of the brethren to whom he vowed submission ever knowing. The attractions of Catholicism or Orthodoxy may never be discussed with anyone except one’s wife or those within the communion to which they are thinking of moving. Brothers who could challenge them and help them think about their questions are not consulted. Often we see things in a very small universe of thought which is determined by our heart commitments. We need the brethren to help us see our questions in a different light and to challenge those heart commitments, yet often we fear to talk to one another about these things. We may think that we are displaying weakness, either theological or emotional. We may expect that anyone in whom we might confide would instantly distance himself and would start to talk to others, “Pray for him, he’s flirting with the Catholic Church. I don’t know what’s gotten into him.”

Ministers need to reach out to one another, pray with and for one another, be more honest with each other. We need to act as Presbyterians who are in fact connected to each other. We are not Presbyterians simply because we like to get together but because of what we believe about the nature of how the church is bound together in Jesus Christ. Paul’s instruction in Galatians 6:2 to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” applies to ministers as brothers in Christ as well as to the congregations we serve. We face busy schedules. Everyone believes that the time is too short for the things he should be doing. Yet the vows a minister takes to be in submission to his brothers reminds him that he must act as one connected to the other ministers in his presbytery by a true and deep bond. It is easy for us to assume that everything is going well with all the other pastors in our presbytery. It is admittedly uncomfortable to ask difficult questions and have them asked of us. And it is discouraging to be honest with a brother and have him ignore the painful doubts you’ve expressed or give you some pat and glib answer. Yet we must labor at this in order to live up to our claim to be Presbyterian.

The gospel constantly reminds us of our own weakness. When we confess Christ, we are publicly acknowledging our weakness and desperate need for deliverance from our sin and its power. This dependence on Christ does not diminish over time or by being

ordained. We do not become immune to failure, struggle, doubt, or weakness through the laying on of hands. We should not be surprised (saddened? yes, but surprised? no) when a brother confesses his struggle, whether it be with sexual sin, anger, alcohol, or an attraction to a radically different theological view. As Presbyterians we confess the truth of our fallenness, but then we often act surprised when others tell of either sin or theological confusion.

In the church we have vowed submission to that Word which we believe is faithfully expressed by our secondary standards, and we have vowed submission to our brethren in the Lord. We are Presbyterians, we are bound to one another in Christ and by his gospel to love one another, bear with each other, and call one another to walk in the light. This may not stop men from moving away from the clarity of the Reformed faith, but it will mean that we are seeking to be faithful to one another and to the Lord of the church as Presbyterians.

**Stephen Doe** *is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church serving as regional home missionary for the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic.*

# ServantWorld

## Form and Message

### A Response

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by T. David Gordon

*Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective*, by Theodore Turnau. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012, xviii + 346 pages, \$19.99, paper.

The typical review of a book takes the book on its own terms and describes its basic content and contributions, and I would be happy to do so for Turnau's *Popologetics*. Others have undertaken such general reviews, and if I were to write one, it would be largely favorable, because I had so appreciated Turnau's articles in *Christian Scholar's Review* and *Calvin Theological Journal*,<sup>1</sup> and I also benefited significantly from this recent book. In the tradition of William Edgar, T. M. Moore, and Aaron Belz, Turnau has provided a volume that greatly assists believers who wish to learn about reality from the artistic products of unbelievers. Turnau's instructions on this point are extremely helpful and extremely judicious.

One part of the book, however, consists of a critique of other Christian approaches to the arts, and on this point I was not only unpersuaded; I was troubled that three "schools" or "approaches" to pop culture appear to have formed, whereas I would have preferred three "perspectives," or complementary approaches. I was especially disappointed in Turnau's critique of Ken Myers.<sup>2</sup> I found little in Turnau's critique of Myers that had not appeared already in William Edgar's review in the *Westminster Theological Journal*,<sup>3</sup> and each shares three problems (Turnau adds a fourth and a fifth):

1. Each appears to misunderstand Myers's reference to C. S. Lewis's distinction between the idea of "using" art and "experiencing" it, found in his *An Experiment in Criticism*.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Myers should not have assumed people knew Lewis on this point, and perhaps he should have explained the matter further, but both Turnau and Edgar appear to think that Lewis/Myers object to any "using" of art; neither of them did. Rather, each described a fundamentally different *approach* to art-in-general (not to any specific work). Lewis would not have objected to "using" the singing of a hymn to rock a child to sleep; he only objected to those whose approach to art-in-general excluded the desire or ability to "experience" art.

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<sup>1</sup> "Reflecting Theologically on Popular Culture as Meaningful: The Role of Sin, Grace, and General Revelation," *Calvin Theological Journal* 37 (2002): 270–96; and "Popular Cultural Worlds as Alternative Religions," *Christian Scholars Review* (Spring 2008): 323–45.

<sup>2</sup> *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> *Westminster Theological Journal* 53, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 377–80.

<sup>4</sup> C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

2. Each claims that Myers's view is "elitist," without giving any compelling reason to find elitism objectionable from a theistic point of view. A plain reading of Philippians 4:8 would appear to commend elitism: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is *honorable*, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is *lovely*, whatever is *commendable*, if there is any *excellence*, if there is anything *worthy of praise*, think about these things." Especially in light of the fact that Myers quotes this passage, I would have preferred that at least one of them (if not both) engaged in an exegetical or theological argument with him. I am self-consciously elitist, vigorously and vocally so. If one definition of "elite" is "the best or most skilled members of a group," why wouldn't all humans aspire to be their best and most skilled? I realize that, in an egalitarian culture, the terms "elite" and "elitist" have become pejorative, but they need not be so, and especially not thoughtlessly. Plato seriously argued (in his *Republic*) that the wisest members of society should rule it; and I still have difficulty finding an error in his reasoning. So if one definition of "elitist" is "someone who believes in rule by an elite group," then Plato was an unquestionable elitist. If I am wrong, someone needs to explain to me why it is wrong to pursue (or approve) what is better and what is best. Further, in one of his essays, Myers actually argues that it is pop culture that is elitist; a very small group of people make the decisions about what they believe will be financially successful, and they impose these on the unsuspecting market: "For the most part, popular culture rarely comes from the people. It comes from elites more decisively than does high culture."<sup>5</sup>

3. Turnau does not appear to notice that Myers's view is formalistic; Myers engages the *forms* of particular aspects of pop art, and the sensibilities those forms encourage. Edgar does recognize the matter, but (naively?) seems to reject McLuhan/Postman/Myers outright: "Christians need to realize that the problem is not the medium, but the way it is used" (379). I will say more about why I regard this as naive below.

4. Turnau refers to his labeling the Myers view the "We're-Above-All-That" view and notes that some may object, to which he offers the following explanation: "I use these labels because they are easy to remember. They nicely sum up the attitudes of their proponents." (133n53). Well, this simply won't do at all, on two grounds. First, one is not entitled to misrepresent a viewpoint in the interests of mnemonics. Myers's approach is a formalist approach; he believes that certain forms of art have different capacities and potentials, and therefore (ordinarily) certain affects that differ from other forms. This view may be right or wrong, in part or whole, and is certainly a matter for public discussion. But it simply is not accurate to describe the view as "We're above all that." Myers's view is not a view about Myers; it is a view about pop culture, and it misrepresents the view to suggest that it says anything about the author. Further, how does Turnau know what Myers's *attitude* is? What he should describe is Myers's position, reasoning, or evidence, not his attitude. Those of us in the Westminster tradition observe that our Larger Catechism (q. 145) regards as a violation of the ninth commandment (among other things): "misconstructing intentions, words, and actions," and I would suggest that guessing about someone's intentions/attitudes virtually guarantees that one will occasionally misconstrue them.

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<sup>5</sup> Myers, "Is 'Popular Culture' Either?", accessed at <http://www.modernreformation.org/pub/mr/mr97/1997.01.JanFeb/mr9701.km.popular.ht>

5. Turnau simply misrepresents Myers by suggesting that Myers made a comprehensive claim where he only made a potential and qualified claim:

What Turnau says Myers said:

“After all, popular songs, movies, and television shows ‘are not capable of being enjoyed; their only power may be to titillate and distract.’ Popular culture as a whole is clearly something that we are to grow up and out of.” (109)

What Myers actually said:

“Books, plays, films, painting, television, music, and sports can all be better appreciated once we approach them as we ought. Of course, we *may* find that *some* of the more popular songs or television programs or books are really not capable of being enjoyed; their only power may be to titillate and distract.” (183, emphasizes mine)

I do not suggest that Turnau’s misrepresentation is intentional; to the contrary, I believe he is simply a little tone-deaf to formalism. Some people seem to be simply resistant to the idea that certain artistic forms have certain strengths/weaknesses, certain competences/incompetences, certain assets/liabilities. Such people are very resistant to formalist criticism, because they wish to “redeem” every art-form equally.

Some who function in the redeem-the-culture paradigm appear to be ideologically unwilling to appreciate what it means that God made the created order materially, and that different materials have different properties. Myers and those like him do not ordinarily refer to “redeeming” creations but to “creating” creations; not to *redeeming* art but to *creating* art. The redeem-the-culture paradigm, by contrast, is defective, because even the redemptive paradigm in Scripture restores the created order (or aspects thereof) to their original created purpose and intention. That is, artistic activity is perfectly justifiable on a *creationist* paradigm; it does not need a *redemptive* paradigm. Humans, as *Imago Dei*, create analogously to God’s creating, not analogously to God’s redeeming. We do not need to “redeem” sonnets; we just need to write them. We do not need to “redeem” plays; we need to create them. We do not need to “redeem” novels; we need to write them. We would have created had we never fallen; as God’s image, we would have made things that were “pleasing to the eye and good for food” (beautiful and practical, artist and artisan) just because God had done so and made us like him on a creaturely scale. So a Christian aesthetic is much better grounded (in my opinion) in creation than in redemption. And even a Christian criticism or critical theory (also in my opinion) is better grounded in creation than in redemption; the goal of criticism is to observe what is in a given artistic work, and a proper understanding of creation permits that adequately. If we observed a particular work of art, and if the artist who produced the work happens to have been an unbeliever, and if we learned something about reality from that artist, I suggest that the ordinary language for such an event is this: “I learned a good deal from that work of art.”

The creationist paradigm of art tends to be formalist. It acknowledges and submits to God’s created order, and acknowledges therefore the material properties of the various

aspects of God's order as "good." These material properties are not "limiting" until/unless we attempt to make them do more than they are capable of doing. It is not "limiting" that the dolphin cannot fly or that the hawk cannot swim; this is simply a reflex of the material properties God gave them. God gave fins to one and feathers to the other. Similarly, the various material properties of the various human arts that have developed are not plenipotentiary. We can never make a dynamic/kinetic art out of statuary; but statuary is three-dimensional in a way that painting or film is not.<sup>6</sup> The material properties of a given art-form need not be thought of as limits; they may be thought of as potentials, and it is the human creator's duty to discover and explore these (divinely-given-in-creation) potentials. To deny the differing potentials of water color painting and oil painting is to deny the created, material difference between oil and water. God made both, as properties inherent in the material order, and the artist's duty is to do with each what can best be done with each.

Discovering and exploring the various material properties of various art-forms, however, necessarily makes one a formalist. The kazoo has different acoustic properties than does the pipe organ, for instance, and the kazoo cannot be "redeemed" to play Bach's *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor* (nor would the organ ordinarily be as appropriate to play at a five-year-old's birthday party). The trumpet will not be able to do justice to the Brahms *Cello Sonata No. 1*, and the cello will not do justice to Clarke's *Trumpet Voluntary*. Nor do we need to "redeem" the one to do what its material properties do not permit it to do; we need merely understand their respective acoustic properties and respect their material distinctives.

If we return to the critique of Ken Myers, then, "redeemers" just do not appear to understand "creators." They appear unwilling to accept the material limits/potentials<sup>7</sup> that God has invested the created order with. Some art-forms have different creative potential than others. Commercial television, for example, cannot do some of the things film can do, because film is not interrupted by commercials every six minutes. Therefore, a skilled screenwriter can work with pacing, whereas a television-writer really cannot do much with the same (imagine writing a symphony that has interruptions every six minutes and you'll get the point). So one can write for television or one can write for film; but one cannot do everything with commercial television that one can do with film. Think of the languishing pace of so much of the film, "A River Runs through It," and imagine how frustrating it would be to watch the same film disrupted by commercial messages. Television cannot be "redeemed" to morph into film; it simply has different properties.

Listening to pop/rock music in the 1970s, we realized that commercial radio had similar limitations. Due to the demand for commercials every six to nine minutes, longer pieces were never aired on the radio, and we had to purchase LPs in order to hear things such as Traffic's "Low Spark of High-Heeled Boys." The very *form* of commercial radio

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<sup>6</sup> And Frederic Remington, curiously and interestingly, created bronze statuary that "froze" kinetic activity. Using a non-kinetic form, he created fascinating sculpture of kinetic activity.

<sup>7</sup> I often say "limits/potentials" or "potentials/limits," because, for me, the two are merely two sides of a coin. Whatever an art's peculiar potential is "limits" it from doing what other art-forms can do better; but the converse is also true. Whatever "limits" an art-form from doing what another art-form does better becomes its distinctive potential, to be explored and appreciated. The car-chase scene in Steve McQueen's 1968 film "Bullitt," for example, reaches its potential in film projected in a theater. A novelist could not make one's stomach jump, and an iPhone's screen is simply too small. So film displayed on a large screen simply has different potential than novel or poem (and the converse is true).

limited the *length* of music that was composed for it (this has largely changed now, of course).

Ken Myers's critique of pop culture is a formalist critique, a critique that takes into consideration the forms of pop culture (not merely its content, and not merely the creator's intent to "redeem" the form), including those forms essential to commercial success. Such formalist critique may surely be augmented by other critiques (and Myers does acknowledge them), but the converse does not appear to be so. The Edgar/Turnau/redeem-culture approach does not appear to recognize the validity of the formalist critique, and it is therefore short-sighted. I regard it as almost breathtakingly naive that a pianist with the skill of Bill Edgar can say, "Christians need to realize that the problem is not the medium, but the way it is used." Edgar must surely realize that the vast literature of piano music cannot all be played on the harpsichord. Indeed the piano-forte was invented/developed precisely to avoid/evoke the perceived dynamic limits of the harpsichord, to permit an expressiveness unattainable on the harpsichord. So the problem, in this case, is precisely the medium; the harpsichord simply cannot do some of what the piano can do.<sup>8</sup> Its limits/potentials simply differ, because the material properties (plucked strings v. hammered strings) of the two instruments differ. The world's most skilled harpsichordist simply cannot produce Debussy's *Clare de Lune*. Only if one rejects the material nature of created reality, or if one rejects that such material nature is "good," does one regard the varying potentials of varying materials as a limit to be overcome ("redeemed") rather than a potential to be explored.

At this moment, I perceive three "schools" of evangelical approaches to the arts (and especially to pop art), which I call "content analysis," "intent analysis," and "formal analysis." The first was/is largely concerned with the content of art, and was/is largely negative: too much violence, profanity, or sexuality. The second was/is largely concerned with the intent of the creator or viewer to perceive reality properly through the art-form; Turnau's book<sup>9</sup> is an excellent (and extremely helpful) guide to this approach. The third was/is largely concerned with addressing the formal properties<sup>10</sup> of a given art-form, and how this determines what can be done with that art-form. In my judgment each is legitimate, and each corresponds, roughly, to John M. Frame's tri-perspectivalism. Content criticism is normative; intent criticism is existential; and formal criticism is situational. From my point of view, then, each is legitimate, and each is necessary to a comprehensive critique. I have no interest in entering what I regard as a bit of a skirmish between the content-critics and the intent-critics, who appear to have little to do with one another. And I have no interest in saying which of the three types of analysis is better or more important, because I believe all three are important. Theodore Turnau, William Edgar, T. M. Moore, Aaron Belz, and many others, have ably demonstrated in their essays the keen insight into the human condition that can often be gleaned by the artistic endeavors of unbelieving artists; and I am genuinely grateful for their labors. Similarly, I join nearly all Christian parents in wishing that pop culture did not so frequently glorify

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<sup>8</sup> Though the potential runs better the other way. Murray Perahia's piano interpretation of the Bach *Goldberg Variations* for harpsichord is lovely.

<sup>9</sup> And his equally-stimulating earlier aforementioned articles in *Calvin Theological Journal* and *Christian Scholars Review*.

<sup>10</sup> These formal properties are themselves, of course, often determined by commercial considerations; and no analysis of pop culture is complete without considering the commercial interests that drive it.

violence, casual sex, and profanity. I also have gained much insight from formal analysts such as Ken Myers, who have aided me in learning to appreciate from any art-form what it is likely to do better or best. So I embrace and employ all three analyses, and only object when one or the other of those three appears unwilling to recognize the value of the other two.

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# ServantReading

## The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church Series Review (Part Two)

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by Dennis E. Johnson

*The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, by Hughes Oliphant Old. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. Volume 4: *The Age of the Reformation*, 2002, 556 pages, \$52.00. Volume 5: *Moderatism, Pietism, and Awakening*, 2004, 620 pages, \$55.00.

I may as well start with the confession: when Part One of this review appeared in the August-September of 2012 of *Ordained Servant*, I seriously expected to be able to read, digest, and then review the final four volumes in H. O. Old's majestic series in a single, second installment, within a timely schedule. That hope proved utterly unfounded. So *Ordained Servant's* patient and flexible editor has again responded graciously to my plea to renegotiate our "covenant treaty," allowing me to review volumes 4 and 5 now, and then to submit a third installment a bit later. As it turns out, this unanticipated three-installment format means that each part will treat about a third of the material in Old's seven volumes: volumes 1–3 (covering roughly 28 centuries) contain about 1,400 pages of text; volumes 4–5 (covering about three centuries) contain about 1,100 pages; and volumes 6–7 (covering a bit over two centuries) contain just over 1,600 pages.

Themes and perspectives introduced in the first three volumes reappear and are reinforced in volumes 4 and 5, which explore Christian preaching and worship in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Preaching God's Word is the central event of the church's corporate worship. Preaching should, indeed, responsibly exposit and pastorally apply the text of the Bible to the spiritual needs of listeners. Although festal preaching on appropriate biblical passages and the use of lectionaries in text selection have their place, Old generally commends the *lectio continua* approach of preaching through biblical books, practiced by Fathers such as Chrysostom and Reformers such as Bucer and Calvin as a way of giving God's people a consistent, contextually-informed grasp of God's Word. Preaching has a doxological objective, fostering adoration of God for his glory and his grace. Preaching in the context of the church's worship should be evangelistic, not only with a view toward calling unbelievers to repentance and faith but also with a view toward grounding believers' pursuit of holiness in the gospel, motivating obedience through grateful assurance rather than insecure fear or bare duty. Catechetical preaching has proven its value in establishing recent converts and all the faithful, generation after generation, in the cardinal truths revealed in the Bible. With respect to language and

style, either simplicity or literary polish, extemporaneous delivery or prepared manuscripts, may effectively convey God's message to human hearts. Yet a plain style does not have to be devoid of vivid imagery and illustration, and biblical illustrations and images are particularly powerful when employed appropriately. Effective preachers find ways to bring the truth home to hearers' hearts intelligibly, persuasively, and movingly. The reading of substantial portions of Scripture in the church's worship liturgy is a legacy worth recovering, a virtue deserving emulation by the twenty-first century church. The consistency of a preacher's character with his gospel message of humbling love is a key to the congregation's ready reception of the Word from his lips.

Volume 4 narrates developments in preaching, theology, and worship in the tumultuous sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its focus is on the Western Church, specifically in Germany, Switzerland, France, England, and the Netherlands. Six of its chapters are devoted to preaching in the churches arising from the Reformation. First-generation Reformers (Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Calvin, Latimer, and others) are profiled, as are the pulpit ministries of the Puritans in England and the non-Puritan wing of seventeenth-century Anglicanism, and the flowering of Protestant orthodoxy in Germany, France, and the Netherlands. Two chapters describe preaching developments associated with the Church of Rome: the polemical response of Counter-Reformation spokesmen (Jesuits and others), and the sometimes daring, sometimes diplomatically cautious, confrontation of decadence by French prelates during the reign of Louis XIV.

As its title suggests, volume 5 surveys a variety of theological and ecclesiastical movements that developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (although the brief chapter on Russian Orthodoxy discusses preachers from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries). The focus of attention is on the English-speaking world, old and new, although the German-Lutheran roots of pietism are discussed, and chapters are devoted to the ministry of the Word in the Austro-Hungarian empire, Spanish California, Romania, and Russia. Old shows that the themes and tone of Protestant preaching were subtly reconfigured in the generations following the flowering of Protestant orthodoxy by tensions inherited from the past and pressures exerted by developments in the wider cultural and intellectual milieu. The tensions from the past included the sometimes violent religio-political conflict between Rome and the Reformers and among competing parties within Protestantism, painful and embarrassing expressions of doctrinal extremism that moderating preachers such as the Anglican Latitudinarians sought to avoid. With the church, preachers also confronted the challenge of reviving spiritual vitality and commitment in second-and-later-generation heirs of the Reformation, who formally assented to the gospel of grace that they had inherited but seemed to evidence little of its life-transforming power. Externally, the influence of the Enlightenment and the rise of romanticism encouraged subtle shifts in homiletic strategy (from heralding divine revelation to invoking human reason) and thematic focus (from the objective realities of Christ's redemptive accomplishment and God's justifying verdict to the subjectivity of conversion experience and moral reformation).

Old's herculean endeavor to survey the history of Christian homiletical and liturgical practice as comprehensively as possible means that at certain points only general summaries can be offered, such as when few sermons have survived from preachers who were lauded by their contemporaries as heralds of the Word. These sections help to fill out readers' sense of the great company of preachers worldwide and through the ages,

but pastors seeking to learn from past mentors may find these historical surveys informative but minimally helpful.

Elsewhere, on the other hand, our author capitalizes on the abundance of available resources by leading us through a reflective engagement with one or several sermons from particular preachers. Here is where I find Old's discussion most illuminating and edifying. For example, Puritan John Flavel's sermon series, gathered and published as *Seaman's Companion*, exemplifies the application of profound biblical themes—prayer, divine providence, humility—to the concrete living conditions and challenges confronting a specific congregation (seafaring families in the English port city, Dartmouth) (4.319–26).<sup>1</sup> Old invests 16 pages in reflection on the sermon series by Thomas Shepard, a Massachusetts Bay Colony pastor and a founder of Harvard College, expounding Jesus's parable of the ten virgins awaiting the bridegroom (4.194–209). Shepard's exposition and application of the parable sometimes wanders into allegory. However, we have much to learn from his pastoral boldness and skill in addressing the spiritual lethargy threatening American colonists whose living conditions had improved from a dire struggle for survival to a degree of comfort and security. I found it spiritually refreshing to be guided through sermons by Scotland's Robert Walker (1716–84) on providence (Heb. 13:5) and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 11:28), with extensive quotations from the latter sermon (5.465–77). It was a feast for the soul to sample the formidable gifts of Thomas Chalmers as he answered the intellectual challenges of the Enlightenment and expounded the transformative beauty and power of the gospel from Romans 5 in his classic message, "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection" (5.514–38).

I mentioned in the Part One of this review that readers may differ at points with how and where Dr. Old draws lines between faithful and less-than-faithful gospel proclamation, and volume 4 presented such a case to me. Old is convinced, as I am, that Christ, his cross, and God's grace to us in this crucified and risen Son, must be central to the preaching of the Word. Yet that conviction seems to be applied inconsistently in his assessment of those whose sermons have centered elsewhere. Those of us who would insist that the Reformation is not "over" will be frustrated, for example, by the ambivalence of his discussion of Rome's Counter-Reformation preachers. On the one hand, he opens the chapter with the frank observation, "for the most part Counter-Reformation preaching quite intentionally moved in the opposite direction" from the preaching of the Protestant Reformers (4.160). He notes that Jesuit champions such as Robert Bellarmine "found the Augustinian concept of grace repugnant," preferring "a salvation achieved by a decision of the free will followed by a life of virtue and good works" to "the idea that one is saved by grace through faith" (4.197–98). Having surveyed sermons in which Bellarmine portrays salvation "in terms of an *imitatio Christi* rather than as a vicarious atonement," Old expresses regret over "the Pelagian tendency of these sermons" (4.204). Yet his irenic ecumenism prompts him to opine that, despite such critiques, "we still want to recognize that Christ was preached and, through the preaching of the Counter-Reformation, many came to faith. For that, we must recognize these preachers as brothers in the service of the gospel" (4.160). One wonders: What sort of faith? Which gospel? By contrast, Old highlights the centrality of the atoning work of Christ on our behalf in John Calvin's Holy Week sermons (1558):

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<sup>1</sup> In this review citations from *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures* are identified simply by volume and page. Thus "4.319–26" is volume 4, pages 319–26.

The burden of preaching the cross for Calvin is not to exhort his congregation to take up their cross and follow Christ; although that theme is not absent from Calvin's preaching, it is not primary. . . . The primary theme of Calvin's preaching is that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. (4.125)

I finish these volumes stimulated to seek out and sample sermons from some of the past preachers to whom Dr. Old has introduced me. My curiosity was piqued as well about homiletics manuals that Old mentioned in passing or summarized: the Lutheran Andreas Hyperius's sixteenth century homiletical handbook (4.371); the Huguenot Jean Claude's essay on the composition of sermons (4.445–46), later included by Charles Simeon in his collection of over 2,500 sermon outlines, *Horae Homileticae* (5.467–69); F. A. Lampe's "classic of Dutch homiletics," *Homileticarum Breviarum* (4.460); and others. I suspect that Dr. Old will be pleased that his work has whetted others' appetites to read more fully and learn more deeply from the company of preachers who have preceded us.

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# ServantReading

## The War in Words

### A Review Article

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by Allen Tomlinson

*Letters from the Front: J Gresham Machen's Correspondence from World War I*, transcribed and edited by Barry Waugh. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012, xxvi + 342 pages, \$24.99, paper.

I began reading Dr. Machen's books in earnest around twenty-five years ago. Because there is a limited literary heritage we can draw upon as far as works published by J. Gresham Machen, at a certain point I began to allow myself only one new book of his annually. I saw early on that I would soon read all of his works, and finding an enormous amount of enjoyment in reading Machen, I tried to make the experience last, like savoring a sip of a really good wine. Alas, some time ago now all his books and published anthologies of his writings were completed, so that for the last year I have been reading his *Presbyterian Guardian* articles on line. I will run out of those soon.

My great pleasure in Dr. Machen's writings is first a theological/biblical pleasure. I happen to agree with him in almost all that he has to say, as far as his works as a New Testament scholar and Christian apologist. Even in those few places where I might not be in total alignment with him, I am always challenged and strengthened as far as my own reflections on the subject or text. His more political articles have also greatly influenced that aspect of my thinking as an American living in the twenty-first century. His concerns were at times almost prophetic, as far as seeing the logical consequences of policies enacted sixty to eighty years ago. Finally, his very style of writing is extremely engaging. His use of logic, as a handmaiden of and not a lord over truth, is compelling, persuasive, and instructive. Whether I agree with him or not, politically or theologically, I have a hard time "putting it down." I find an aesthetic enjoyment as I savor how he says what he says and how he argues his case, as well as being challenged by the content itself.

That is why I was excited to find that this collection of his World War I correspondence had been published. When I have enjoyed the writings or preaching of an important historical figure, I like to read an account of the life of the subject. Now the kinds of biographies I most enjoy are those that do not spend most of their time "preaching" to me, but those that give me the hard, cold facts. If it is an ecclesiastical figure, I already get my "sermon" from their preaching or writings. What I want in the biography are some details of the author or preacher's life that help me understand the individual himself better. For example, one thing I really appreciated about George Marsden's *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*<sup>1</sup> is his attention to the details of Edwards's life.

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<sup>1</sup> George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

Though appreciating thoughtful but short evaluations by the biographer, I would rather he stick to his work as a historian instead of doing the work of a preacher or moralist.

Now the reason for my seeming digression is this: in a book of collected letters by an individual the reader has access to all kinds of great details about the person. Even the really minor details that a biographer does not have time to fool around with. In the process, I feel like I really get to “know” the great person. That is how this collection of Dr. Machen’s letters made me feel about this professor-author-preacher from whom I had found such great help and pleasure as I have studied his extant writings. I feel like I know the great man himself a little better, which I believe will contribute to my profit and pleasure in re-reading his articles and books. So it is some of the personal details I want to catalogue in this review. With a view to whetting the readers’ appetite to obtain and read the book itself, I will make very brief comments regarding the following aspects of J. Gresham Machen’s character manifested in this WW I correspondence: his relationship with his mother; his work ethic and ability to work with others; his adaptability; and his response to both serious and small trials.

Machen’s close relationship with his mother comes out in his letters to and about her. Most of the letters in the collection are actually to his mother; a few are to other family or friends. It is very evident that this celibate bachelor maintained a great emotional dependency upon his mother. This, to the reviewer, seems very natural and important. If masculinity and femininity both reflect important aspects of God’s image, and if woman was created for man because it was not good for man to be alone, then where it is not God’s plan for matrimony, it would seem important that one’s relationship to mother or father or to a brother or a sister would be important for a kind of “completion” of personality. Not having a wife, Machen’s godly mother would have helped round out his human personality in a way necessary for us all. In the midst of really horrible and even very dangerous circumstances, this great scholar manifests an ongoing concern for his mother, being greatly concerned about her health and her personal enjoyment of life. For both her emotional and physical well-being, for example, he beseeches her to carry through on a planned holiday away from home. When her Christmas package to him was lost, so that it arrived long after the holiday, and when some of her letters were sent to one wrong address after another so that they arrived out of order and very delayed, and when he wrote about re-reading her letters multiple times, it is obvious from his comments how much he depended on her love for emotional strength.

Machen’s high standard for his personal labors is seen in his initial frustration with his YMCA assignments.<sup>2</sup> At his first main post, the French co-director appears to just take over and to micro-manage Machen. How maddening this is to the Princeton scholar is a main theme in several letters. At least in part, this may have been due to Machen being accustomed to less direct supervision in his work as a professor, so that he had to get used to being “bossed around.” However, more to the point is the high standard he set for his daily labors, wanting to be really useful and not redundant. Later when he was the “boss” of other YMCA stations, he worked incredibly long hours at very hard, physical

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<sup>2</sup> Machen was thirty-seven years old when he arrived in France in 1918, having volunteered for one year with the YMCA. He had been opposed to us entering the war at first, but once his fellow Americans were risking life and limb, he wanted to be helpful in a non-combative capacity. It is interesting that as he sees more and more of the war itself, in his letters to his mother his views seem to adapt to the point where he acknowledges the necessity of America being involved.

work, and seemed to enjoy a great relationship with whatever assistant he was given.<sup>3</sup> At a later period of his overseas service, he worked in immediate conjunction with other YMCA volunteers, and appears to have worked well and zealously with them, even when, by any stretch, he was not in complete theological agreement with them.

One very interesting aspect of his work was how at first he enjoyed the more physical tasks, which he saw as a sort of break from his normal scholarly activities, as something that would help him have a greater appreciation for his normal calling when he would return to Princeton. However, after about three-quarters of a year into his service, it becomes evident that he is ready to put aside the more physical labors and do some serious preaching and teaching. One sermon in particular was especially used by the Holy Spirit, in spite of Machen's preaching supposedly being too deep according to YMCA standards. This part of the material is very interesting and thought-provoking. One suspects that if they had turned men like Machen "loose" to preach the real gospel, the "whole counsel of God," there might have been more lasting and even more widespread spiritual fruit. Most of the YMCA work appears, from remarks made by Machen to his mother, to have been mainly outward, social help and not genuine biblical, ministerial work.

After the war was formally ended, he was given many opportunities to give lectures, but these were often not well attended, at least partly due to other competing activities including some sponsored by other YMCA officials. However, Machen did not allow poor attendance to hinder him from doing his best at reaching out with the gospel and with biblical doctrine to those few who showed any interest.

I was very impressed with Dr. Machen's ability to adapt. At first, from his expressed struggles while working with the first French YMCA director, I wondered about the adaptability of this Princeton scholar.<sup>4</sup> However, as he later explained his many frustrations and difficulties, including his inability to get any time alone for devotions and study (for days and weeks on end), his inability to even bathe (for months on end!), the nearly criminal lack of supplies or misappropriation or misdirection of such by administrative error, and his regular disappointment over the (at the very least apparent) lack of sound religious priorities on the part of the leadership—I became very impressed with his ability to adjust to the situation.

For example, here is a convinced Sabbatarian *per* WCF 21, and yet for weeks on end he is unable to worship publicly and barely able to get even a minute for private devotion. However, seeing much of what was going on in this war setting as a work of necessity or mercy, he does not complain and makes the most of his situation, eagerly serving these French and American soldiers. Another example would be his sleeping arrangements, which were manifold and varied, but very rarely really comfortable or even warm. Yet he recognizes that his arrangements are often superior to the soldiers, and so expresses gratitude for every blessing instead of grumbling.

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<sup>3</sup> One assistant, a French soldier named Monti, remained in contact with Dr. Machen after the war, and some of his letters to Machen are given a special chapter at the end of the collection.

<sup>4</sup> A very interesting part of the earlier letters is his spiritual struggle, which he recognized, at maintaining a godly attitude when working with some very difficult people. What do you know! This "hero" of the Reformed faith had the same spiritual struggles that most of us experience! This aspect of the earlier letters is very edifying.

Finally, I want to close with a few remarks regarding Machen's response to trials. Some of the trials were major: his position being overrun by enemy soldiers and warning coming almost too late so that his life was in grave danger for many hours; his being sent to the front lines to render help with refreshments and such, again being in very serious danger; and his flight from danger through thick mud which destroyed his shoes and socks and left him exposed to the elements. Regarding the last example, he had to rummage through a wounded soldier's abandoned backpack to find a warm pair of wool socks. He expresses to his mother his willingness, if possible, to find the true owner to reimburse him many times over for these socks. This was a very personal view of the great Greek scholar that I never received as an undergraduate struggling through his *New Testament Greek for Beginners*.

When being sent to the front lines under great danger, we do not read of him begging off, in spite of the fact he probably could have as a YMCA volunteer who was not a soldier, though we do find him being very careful in his crawling through ditches and hiding behind broken walls. When he was almost captured by the Germans, with only a few minutes to try to salvage a few of his belongings, he was ordered to throw his very hastily packed suitcase onto the back of an army truck. Many months and letters later, he is still trying to find the suitcase and having to do without important personal items.

Another trial was that he had severe dental problems while in France, and due to the war and to differences in American and continental standards had a hard time getting the necessary work done so as to be without pain and discomfort. Again, he "practices what he preaches" and, instead of complaining, merely expresses to his mother these concerns for her prayers.

I have purposefully not footnoted the particulars of Dr. Machen's letters to which short mention has been made. This was with the hope readers might read *Letters from the Front* for themselves for a fuller view of the personality of this great American Reformed "Valiant For Truth." Reading letters such as these, especially from the viewpoint of the man himself, opens up his thoughts and personality to us in ways not seen in his published works.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. Waugh has done us great service in preparing this collection of letters, and by his short footnotes and very helpful "people" index at the back.

# Servant Poetry

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George Herbert (1593-1633)

## Sonnet (I)

My God, where is that ancient heat towards thee,  
Wherewith whole showls of Martyrs once did burn,  
Besides their other flames? Doth Poetry  
Wear Venus livery? only serve her turn?  
Why are not Sonnets made of thee? and layes  
Upon thine Altar burnt? Cannot thy love  
Heighten a spirit to sound out thy praise  
As well as any she? Cannot thy Dove  
Out-strip their Cupid easily in flight?  
Or, since thy wayes are deep, and still the fame,  
Will not a verse run smooth that bears thy name!  
Why doth that fire, which by thy power and might  
Each breast does feel, no braver fuel choose  
Than that, which one day, Worms, may chance refuse?